

Dear families

I hope you are enjoying the summer and managing to get some rest and relaxation. We are in the process of finalising plans for the start of term and there are a few points of information to share with you now.

Lateral Flow testing on return to school

Whilst recent months have seen a move from in-school to home testing for secondary students, schools are now required to carry out 2 lateral flow tests 3-5 days apart for secondary age pupils on return to school in September.

This is subject to parental consent; we have been advised that the parental consents obtained earlier in the year remain valid, and that only new Year 7 pupils or other new students require fresh consent, which will be requested this week. The 2nd test is planned for later the same week, after which we return to home-based Lateral Flow testing twice weekly thereafter. Anyone who tests positive should self-isolate and take a confirmatory PCR test.

Changes to school operations

DfE guidance to schools published in July makes some significant changes to how schools can operate from September. The need to keep children in consistent year group bubbles is ended, which will allow much more flexibility in movement around the school, activities, lunch arrangements and break times.

Schools are no longer expected to undertake close contact tracing; this will be done by NHS Test & Trace. Perhaps most significantly children, and fully vaccinated adults, identified as close contacts (including within a household) will no longer be required to self-isolate; instead they will be advised and encouraged to take a PCR test. So this should mean we see the back of sending large numbers within a year group home.

We have reviewed and updated our risk assessments and drawn up an outbreak management plan, both of which will be published on our website before the start of term. Anyone with symptoms should not come into school / be sent home and seek a PCR test. We will of course continue hand hygiene, enhanced cleaning and ventilation.

Face coverings

Face coverings are no longer advised for students, staff and visitors in classrooms or communal areas. However, although the government has removed the requirement to wear face coverings in law, it expects and recommends that they be worn in enclosed and crowded spaces. This includes public transport and dedicated transport to school. Our intention is to follow this advice and we will make clear to pupils at the start of term what this means in practice. We intend to continue using face coverings in school vehicles and ask students to wear when in transport to and from school.

Vaccination

As I am sure you will be aware, the vaccination is now being offered to some students. Should you be offered the vaccine we would encourage this to be taken up. Students can be classified as children in terms of isolation rules until 6 months after their 18th birthday; not having the vaccine could impact on isolation for some of our older students.

I hope you and your families enjoy what remains of the summer and we look forward to seeing the boys back in school next week.

Best wishes,
Sue